

Cataraqui History and Passenger List

– by Gavin D Peckham with key information supplied by Neil Purdon. June 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The Cataraqui, which brought the first two Peckhams (and others) to Natal, left St Catherine Dock, London under the command of captain J McBeth on 04 August 1861 and arrived at Port Natal (Durban) on 03 November 1861.

There were several ships named Cataraqui that were in service during the 1800s, both at sea and on the Great Lakes. At least some of them, if not all, were built at the Canadian port of Kingston on Lake Ontario at the spot where the Great Cataraqui River enters the lake. In fact, Cataraqui was the original native Indian name for the town now known as Kingston. Perhaps the most famous of these ships was the Cataraqui which sank off the south-west coast of King Island in Bass Strait on 04 August 1845. The sinking was Australia's worst ever maritime civil disaster incident, claiming the lives of 400 people. Fortunately 'our' Cataraqui delivered its immigrant passengers to Durban safely.

The following snippet, <http://images.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/123162/data?n=2> of unspecified origin, gives some insight into the number and variety of Cataraquis floating (!) around at that time:

"This barque Cataraqui could hardly have been the Cataraqui, of 550 tons, which Capt. Robt. Gaskin took from Kingston to the Old Country in the same year, 1854, but what became of either of these Cataraquis I do not know. There was apparently another Cataraqui, built at Quebec by Wm. Lampson in 1840, but she was a full-rigged ship, and was wrecked in 1845 on King's Island, Australia. To further complicate the record, two more schooners called Cataraqui were known on Lake Ontario, one built at Cantin's yard in Montreal in 1857, and owned by W. B. Whitby of Kingston in 1864, and another, seemingly of lesser tonnage, which is reported in the old books of the Port Whitby Harbor Company as making two round trips with the Dundonald and the Queen of the Bay from Whitby to Oswego in the last ten days of April, 1861. This Cataraqui carried 10,142 bushels of wheat which would indicate about 400 tons burden."

Having established that there were several Cataraquis, the one that interests us was built in 1854 in Kingston, Ontario and launched on 02 May 1854. On 09 May 1854 the Cataraqui and was towed down the St Lawrence River, past the rapids to Montreal by the steamer America. In Montreal the Cataraqui was 'fitted for sea'. By 01 June 1854 the Cataraqui was further down the St Lawrence River at the town of Quebec 'completing cargo'. From there she headed out to sea, across the Atlantic under the captaincy of Capt. Hurst, heading for Liverpool with a load of 40 000 staves, inter alia. On arrival in England the ship was sold to new owners and on 20 July 1863 the ship was reported at The Downs off Deal, Kent (*). I do not know what voyages it undertook thereafter, but seven years later the Cataraqui was bound for Natal with our forebears on board.

There is a series of newspaper reports at the end of this document. They give an account of the planning, construction, launching and initial voyage of the Cataraqui.

(*) **The Downs** is a roadstead (area of sheltered anchorage) in the English Channel off the east coast of Kent, at the town of **Deal** which is just north of Dover. See [map](#) at the end of the article.

The [four photos](#) of this passenger list may be found at the following site and are numbered 88 to 91:
https://www.familysearch.org/records/images/image-details?page=1&place=352083&rmsId=TH-909-67002-119586-27&coverageItemIndex=1&imageIndex=87&singleView=true&fbclid=IwAR2yhwxlAJDjN4uPrn051WWKi77XHbSw2IXBgMnzErqJf6sG8_fBOl8fkIE

Photos of the original pages were extremely difficult to locate amidst thousands of archived photos. They were found by **Neil Purdon** who kindly supplied me with the access details recorded above. I then downloaded the photos and transcribed the list of passengers. This appears below.

NOTES:

Anything in square brackets has been inserted by me, GDP.

The passenger names are **not** in strict alphabetical order but appear in the same order as they do in the original entries.

I have tried to copy the spelling of the entries as accurately as possible.

The "Remarks" column (not transcribed here) is largely blank but has many entries stating, "£11 per statute adult paid in England". A "statute adult" was one adult or two children. I don't know why an adult had to pay £11 if it was paid in England, but only £10 if they paid after arrival in Natal. People who had already paid in England obviously did not require surety since there was nothing still owing.

The cost of the voyage was £10 per adult, £5 per child under 10 with infants travelling free of charge. However, careful scrutiny appears to show a few small discrepancies.

The 116 people on this list so far are the "Government Immigrants". I have not yet found any information about the "Cabin Passengers" or the "Steerage Class" passengers who were on-board.

Shelagh O'Byrne Spencer writes, "Government-sponsored immigration: The last addition to Natal's white population before the advent of the 1860s was the result of a Government scheme instituted in 1857, whereby the Government would pay the passages of intending immigrants as long as someone in the Colony would stand surety for the repayment of fares, in instalments, by the immigrants so introduced. This scheme was largely confined to relations, friends, and prospective employees of existing colonists, and a number of new families arrived with the old familiar surnames, such as Brickhill, Brunton, Cowey, Dickens, Dolphin, Drew, Fayers, Gavin, Holliday, Horsley, Jardine, Joyner, Newlands, Palframan, Stead and Wray."

Names of Immigrants	Age	Amt to be repaid	Names of Sureties
Anfield, George	25		
Alcock, Thomas	26		
Butt, Maria	31	£15	Joseph Risley, PMBurg
Butt, Frances	8		
Bunting, Frederick	22	£10	John Ansell, PMBurg.
Boyd, John	34	£30	H. Herron and Jas. [James] Boyd, 31 Pietermaritz St [PMBurg].
Boyd, Margaret	26		
Boyd, Mary A	24		
Bell, John I	27	£35	Wm. [William] Bell, Blacksmith, York [KZN]
Bell, Rachel	25		
Bell, Mary	3		
Bell, Orphelia	?		
Bell, Elizabeth	Infant		
Bell, John	64	£40	Same [i.e. William Bell of York]

Bell, Rachel	64		
Bell, Mary	25		
Bell, Ann	25		
Bransby, William	37		
Bransby, Hannah	39		
Bransby, Mary	9		
Bransby, Janet	6		
Bransby, Matthew	4		
Bransby, Ebenezer	2		
Baxter, Richard	26	£30	John Baxter. Clerk. PMBurg.
Baxter, Sarah	32		
Baxter, Elizabeth	3		
Baxter, John	2		
Butler, Ellen	27	£10	Wm. Fennel[?] (RE) & Wm. Burrows, Canteenkeeper, PMBurg.
Clarke, John	24		
Curry, Maria	27		
Curry, Thomas	20	£20	John Curry, PMBurg
Page 2			
Fyfe, James	45	£80	George Thompson, Teacher, Durban
Fyfe, Agnes	45		
Fyfe, Agnes	20		
Fyfe, Eliza	16		
Fyfe, Eleanor	14		
Fyfe, John B.	18		
Fyfe, Jane	9		
Fyfe, James	6		
Fyfe, George	3		
Fyfe, Robert	1		
Green, Mary A	30		
Green, Jane	30	£10	Richard Todman, Durban
Golding, Joseph	36	£10	Peter James, Durban
Grey, James	22	£10	John Gavin, Engineer, Durban
Hall, Thomas	19	£40	[No surety recorded.]
Hall, Mary A.	18		
Hall, Harriett E.	14		
Hall, Robert	12		
Latter, Harriett	21	£10	Stephen Starr, PMBurg.
Lamb, George	36		
Lamb, Elizabeth	30		
Lamb, Anne	2		
Lamb, Mary	1		
Marriot, Samuel	21	£20	John Dove, Clairmont.
Marriot, Emily	20		
McGlashen, Jane	21	£10	Alex McGregor & Andrew Swan, PMBurg
McKillican, Thomas	24	£10	John Gavin, Engineer, Durban
Metcalf, John	23		
McRae, Ann	24	£10	Kenneth McKenzie, Mason, PMBurg
Peckham, Matilda	21	£10	Stephen Starr PMBurg
wife of H Sanders			[This comment was inserted in the list of passenger names and the H Sanders referred to is listed below as Henry Saunders.]
Pinkney, James	25	£30	Geo. [George] Pinkney, Bricklayer, PMBurg

Pinkney, Mary A 20
Pinkney, Sarah 2
Pinkney, Louisa Infant

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Peckham, Frederick 25
Peckham, Elizabeth 23

Name of Vessel.	Date of Arrival 1861	Names of Sureties.	Names of Immigrants.	Adults. Age.	Children. Age.	Total Adults.
Cataragui	Nov. 3	—	Peckham, Frederick " Elizabeth	25 1 23 1	6 1 17	36 2

Robinson, Thomas	27	£25	Matthew Parnaby, Nonoti [An area north of Stanger, KZN]
Robinson, Isabella	24		
Robinson, Ann	?		
Robinson, John	64	£20	John Moss, 84 Burger St. PMBg
Robinson, Jane	62		
Russell, Thomas	32	£35	Joseph Smith, Durban, Farmer
Russell, Mary J.	30		
Russell, Sarah E.	8		
Russell, Adelaide L.	4		
Russell, John T.	2		
Saunders, Henry	47	£50	Stephen Starr, Farmer, PMBurg.
Saunders, Sarah A.	46		
Saunders, Henry	21		
Saunders, George	15		
Saunders, Mary J.	12		
Stead, Benjamin	41	£75	Matthew Stead, Allerton, near PMBurg, Farmer
Stead, Eliza	39		
Stead, Samuel	20		
Stead, Mary A.	18		
Stead, Thomas	16		
Stead, Charles	16		
Stead, Elizabeth	12		
Stead, Emily	3		
Sleightholm, James P.	21	£20	John Moreland, D.W. Tarboton, Edendale, PMBurg
Sleightholm, Martha	20		[The sureties names, above, were carefully crossed out.]
Spenser, John	29	£16 13s 4p	Bond ??? in England
Spenser, Catherine	21		
Spenser, Emma	?		[Presumably an infant.]
Stanley, Mary	26		

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Todman, Richard	60	£70	Richard Todman, Cutlet & Turner, Durban.
Todman, Hannah	56		
Todman, Elizabeth	31		
Todman, James	23		
Todman, Charlotte	20		
Todman, Mary A.	16		
Todman, Emma	11		

Todman, John	8		
Taggart, Moses	25	£10	Charles Fitzsimons, Carpenter & Builder, Durban
Teagrie?, William	22	£10	Richard Todman, Durban
Walker, Charles	36	£40	John Moreland
Walker, Ann	40		
Walker, Elizabeth	7		
Walker, Ann	5		
Walker, James	4		
Walker, Mary	2		
Wakes?, John	40	£10	Wm. G. Baker, PMBurg [text then crossed out.]
Walker, Christopher	22	£10	[No surety recorded.]
Marshall, Charles	23	£10	[No surety recorded.]
Silburne, William	22	£10	[No surety recorded.]

Alphabetical List of Passengers (Government Sponsored Immigrants only)

Alcock, Thomas	Curry, Maria	McKillican, Thomas	Spenser, John
Anfield, George	Curry, Thomas	McRae, Ann	Stanley, Mary
Baxter, Elizabeth	Fyfe, Agnes	Metcalf, John	Stead, Benjamin
Baxter, John	Fyfe, Agnes	Peckham, Elizabeth	Stead, Charles
Baxter, Richard	Fyfe, Eleanor	Peckham, Frederick	Stead, Eliza
Baxter, Sarah	Fyfe, Eliza	Peckham, Matilda	Stead, Elizabeth
Bell, Ann	Fyfe, George	Pinkney, James	Stead, Emily
Bell, Elizabeth	Fyfe, James	Pinkney, Louisa	Stead, Mary A.
Bell, John	Fyfe, James	Pinkney, Mary A	Stead, Samuel
Bell, John I	Fyfe, Jane	Pinkney, Sarah	Stead, Thomas
Bell, Mary	Fyfe, John B.	Robinson, Ann	Taggart, Moses
Bell, Mary	Fyfe, Robert	Robinson, Isabella	Teagrie?, William
Bell, Orphelia	Golding, Joseph	Robinson, Jane	Todman, Charlotte
Bell, Rachel	Green, Jane	Robinson, John	Todman, Elizabeth
Bell, Rachel	Green, Mary A	Robinson, Thomas	Todman, Emma
Boyd, John	Grey, James	Russell, Adelaide L.	Todman, Hannah
Boyd, Margaret	Hall, Harriett E.	Russell, John T.	Todman, James
Boyd, Mary A	Hall, Mary A.	Russell, Mary J.	Todman, John
Bransby, Ebenezer	Hall, Robert	Russell, Sarah E.	Todman, Mary A.
Bransby, Hannah	Hall, Thomas	Russell, Thomas	Todman, Richard
Bransby, Janet	Lamb, Anne	Saunders, George	Wakes?, John
Bransby, Mary	Lamb, Elizabeth	Saunders, Henry	Walker, Ann
Bransby, Matthew	Lamb, George	Saunders, Mary J.	Walker, Ann
Bransby, William	Lamb, Mary	Saunders, Sarah A.	Walker, Charles
Bunting, Frederick	Latter, Harriett	Silburne, William	Walker, Christopher
Butler, Ellen	Marriot, Emily	Sleightholm, James	Walker, Elizabeth
Butt, Frances	Marriot, Samuel	Sleightholm, Martha	Walker, James
Butt, Maria	Marshall, Charles	Spenser, Catherine	Walker, Mary
Clarke, John	McGlashen, Jane	Spenser, Emma	

End of list – page down for Newspaper Reports or: [Back to Top of Article](#)

Source: <http://images.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/37385/data>

This was link sent to me by **Neil Purdon**.

The following newspaper articles are in date order. They give an account of the Cataraqui's planning, construction, launching and its descent of the rapids on the St Lawrence River to reach the sea. There is some rather tedious reading interspersed with some very interesting material which makes the effort to read it worthwhile. Although not stated, these items are, from the beginning, referring to the ship which was to be named the Cataraqui. Comments in square brackets have been inserted by me – GDP.

SHIPBUILDING – We under-stand that Capt. Gaskin has ordered, to be built at the Marine Railway yard in this city, a ship which will register 500 tons, to be treenailed and coppered and clipper modelled. The dimensions of the projected ship are fixed at 145 feet keel, 28 feet beam, 16 feet depth of hold. This is a new enterprise, which we trust will turn out as well as Capt. Gaskin's last effort, while it will undoubtedly add to the reputation as well as to the business of Kingston as a ship-building port.

Daily News, Kingston

August 4, 1853

SHIPBUILDING -- The keel of Capt. Gaskin's second ship was yesterday laid at the Marine Railway shipyard. She is to be about 15 of 16 feet longer than the one now on the stocks, and will measure 800 tons. The first is well advanced, as nearly half the planking is done. Both ships will be out early in the season, and as will be seen by a notice elsewhere, are advertised for Liverpool.

Daily News, Kingston

January 12, 1854

IMPORTANT TO SHIPPERS FOR LIVERPOOL DIRECT

Early in the spring will be despatched from this port, for Liverpool direct,

TWO CLIPPER SHIPS, copper fastened, now building at this port, respectively 720 and 800 tons. Will be ready to receive cargo on the 20th. April. For freight or passage apply to - G.M. Kinghorn, United States Wharf, or to the owner Hobert Gaskin.

Daily News, Kingston

January 12, 1854

THE LAKE AND OCEAN TRADE. -- Kingston papers state that Captain Robert Gaskin, who formerly commanded a steamer running to Rochester, advertises that he will dispatch from Kingston early in the spring, for Liverpool direct, two copper-fastened clipper ships of 720 and 800 tons burthen. The ships are now building at Kingston.

Buffalo Daily Courier

January 30, 1854

LAUNCH--Capt. Gaskin's new barque will be launched from the Marine Railway Shipyard on Saturday next, at 3 p.m. We are pleased to learn that a set of colours for the ship is about to be presented to the Captain by the merchants of the city in testimony of their appreciation of his enterprise.

Daily News, Kingston

April 26, 1854

The presentation, of the set of colors for Capt. Gaskin's new vessel will take place this day (Friday) at 12:30 o'clock. Subscribers are requested to meet in the news room at 12.

Daily News, Kingston

April 28, 1854

PRESENTATION OF COLORS Yesterday, shortly after noon, the members of the Board of Trade, the Mayor, the member for the city and other gentlemen, assembled in the News Room, and from

thence proceeded to the Marine Railway Yard, for the purpose-of presenting to Captain Gaskin a set of colours for the new ship to be launched today. They were received at the head of the stage by Capt. Gaskin, and the colours presented by John Watkins, Esq, President of the Board of Trade, with a few appropriate remarks, followed by the Hon. J.A. Macdonald, who expressed at length and in an eloquent address the sentiments entertained by all, of the Capt's enterprize and the importance to Kingston of the new trade opened through him. Capt. Gaskin replied, and subsequently, nearly fifty gentlemen sat down in the cabin of the new ship to partake of a lunch which had been provided by the Captain for the occasion. We have not room this morning for the particulars of this portion of the proceedings, suffice it for the present to say that it was nearly four o'clock before the party broke up. We shall refer again to the matter in our next impression.

Daily News, Kingston

April 29, 1854

Launch Postponed -- In consequence of the severity of the weather on Saturday, it was deemed expedient to postpone the launching of Captain Gaskin's new bark until today. The launch will take place this afternoon at half-past three.

Daily News, Kingston

May 1, 1854

THE LAUNCH---Owing to the very unfavorable state of the weather, this was postponed from Saturday to Monday, and again until yesterday. The weather, yesterday, was of the most delightful character, and an immense crowd occupied every available spot for a view of the launch, while between two and three hundred ladies and gentlemen were admitted on board the ship, in the cabin of which ample refreshments were provided. A few minutes after the time appointed, half past three p.m. (and the delay was occasioned by a schooner which had anchored in the line of the ships movement from the ways), the signal was given, and then the CATARAQUI glided gracefully into her destined element. She was subsequently taken in tow by the steamer JOHN COUNTER, and performed a circuit of the bay before being brought alongside the pier. Murdoch's Brass Band were on board the ship. Everything went off in the most satisfactory manner.

Daily News, Kingston

May 3, 1854

SHIPBUILDING - CATARAQUI

We had barely time to mention on Saturday last the presentation to Capt. Gaskin of a set of colors and a spy-glass for his new ship, and we can now but give an outline of the proceedings on that occasion.

The colors, etc., having been presented by the President of the Board of Trade, the Hon. J.A. Macdonald, Member for the city, addressed the Captain, and remarked that it was with no small degree of pleasure that he found himself standing on the deck of so fine a ship as that upon which they were then assembled, he looked with interest upon every enterprise calculated to promote the interests of the city, and the building of such ships as that and the one near it he regarded as a very important enterprise and highly advantageous, not only to Kingston but to the Upper Province; he felt that both were highly indebted to Captain Gaskin for demonstrating so conclusively that the business of building vessels of large tonnage for ocean navigation could be carried on along the upper lakes, and he sincerely trusted that his exertions in this respect would be handsomely remunerated. Hitherto the Upper Canadians had been mere hewers of wood for the lower section of the province, but here it has been satisfactorily shown that this state of things need continue no longer, and that on our rivers and on the margin of our lakes the timber of Upper Canada, such as had usually been sent; at great expense, with great labor, and often at considerable loss, to the lower ports, could be worked up here into ships vieing in beauty and strength with any built at these ports. He was pleased too, to observe the name which had been selected for the new ship. There were a number of Kingstonians in the world-but the name of **Cataraqui - the old Indian name for this port** - would distinguish it from every other, and in whatever portion of the globe it might be the lot of a

Kingstonian to see the burgee of the CATARAQUI flying, he would at once recognise the old name of his own old home and welcome the visitor. He repeated that all interests in Kingston were deeply indebted to Capt. Gaskin for his enterprise in this matter and but expressed the general voice when he wished him and his ship abundant success.

Capt. Gaskin replied, he said that the honour which had been done to him by this presentation was one really unexpected, but one which he should ever remember. He had through many years cherished the idea of building such a ship as that on which they had assembled, and had at length attained his object. Another would soon be ready, and he hoped to see others follow, not only here, but elsewhere, and he had little doubt that others would be built, seeing the facilities which exist in this section of the province for ship-building. For the kind manner in which his name had been mentioned and for the presentation which had just been made he would return his sincere thanks, and express the hope that he would always be enabled to retain the good opinion of his fellow citizens.

The Captain, then invited the Gentlemen into the cabin, where a handsome lunch had been provided, and about forty-five sat down, champagne flowed freely; a number of toasts were proposed, and speeches made by Messrs Campbell, Macdonald, Forsyth, the Mayor, and other gentlemen, and by Messrs Ponton & Read of Belleville. It would be impossible for us to follow these unless in a special report, suffice it to say that upwards of three hours were thus most happily spent.

Daily News, Kingston

May 3, 1854

The bark CATARAQUI, is already taking in a portion of her cargo for Liverpool. This consists of staves belonging to the owner of the vessel. She will probably in the beginning of next week proceed to Montreal via the canal, and thence to sea.

Daily News, Kingston

May 4, 1854

The new bark CATARAQUI left this port yesterday for Montreal [*on the St Lawrence River*], in tow of the steamer AMERICA. She takes down 40,000 staves, which will form part of her outward cargo

Daily News, Kingston

May 10, 1854

INSERT: *A snippet of unspecified origin states, "Lake vessels had begun to voyage overseas in the decade before the Cataraqui, City of Toronto, etc., and by 1860 those which had successfully "gone across" were numbered by the score. Some of these ran the rapids of the St. Lawrence between Prescott and Montreal. It is possible that some of the hulls of deep-sea ships which were rigged vat Quebec after being built on Lake Ontario reached salt water in the same way, floating high without their spars and ballast and guided down the boiling current by a powerful timber tug, in the same way as the Cataraqui."*

The CATARAQUI is now in the Canal Basin at Montreal, having gone down the river without the slightest accident, and is rapidly being fitted for sea. The Arabia is on her way down with a cargo of wheat.

Daily News, Kingston

May 16, 1854

The CATARAQUI -- This is a really magnificent clipper-built bark. We went on board yesterday, and found no expense had been spared to make her a very desirable vessel for traffic and speed. She is 146-1/2 feet long on deck, and her breadth of beam is 29 feet, and depth of hold is 16-1/2 feet, 632 tons register, and draws 9 feet of water. Her accommodations are very spacious - the cabin being 40 by 24 feet, and well finished.

The CATARAQUI was built at Kingston, at the Marine Railway, for the owner, Mr. Gaskin, who intends selling her in London, in the mean-time, it will be seen, she has cleared from our port with a fair cargo, and she will remain at Quebec until completely laden. We were informed by Mr. Gaskin

that he is constructing at Kingston another vessel of larger dimensions to sell in England; the tonnage of this latter vessel is to be over 1,000 tons, and she is to be built like the CATARAQUI, under the inspection of Lloyd's agent for Quebec.

We also observed in our harbour, ready for clearance, another Kingston; built vessel, the ARABIA. This is a three masted brigantine, 125 feet in length, and 25 feet in beam, with a depth of hold of 10-1/2 feet. She is bound for Glasgow.

Kingston is fast earning a good reputation for ship architecture, and if Capt. Gaskin is equally successful with this vessel as he was with the one he sold last summer, we may expect to find fleets of vessels built at Kingston to supply the English market (Montreal, Transcript)

Daily News, Kingston

May 27, 1854

The CATARAQUI is at Quebec [*on the St Lawrence River*], completing cargo.

Daily News, Kingston

June 1, 1854

The bark CATARAQUI, Capt. Hurst, of this port, arrived at **Deal** [See map below] on the 20th. ult.

Daily News, Kingston

August 4, 1854

PORT OF MONTREAL- Shipping Register.

Port Number - 9 of 1854

Name:- CATARAQUE

Type:- Bark

Tonnage:- 631 tons burthen

When built:- 1854

Where built:- Kingston

Builders name & date of certificate:- May 1, 1854,
Kingston Marine Railway Co.

Date of registration at port of Montreal:- May 23, 1854

Description of vessel:-

Length 157 feet & 8 tenths

Breadth 27 feet & 2 tenths

Depth of hold 16 ft & 2 tenths

Decks:- one deck with Poop and top gallant forecastle

Masts:- Three. Stern:- Square.

Bowsprit:- Standing.

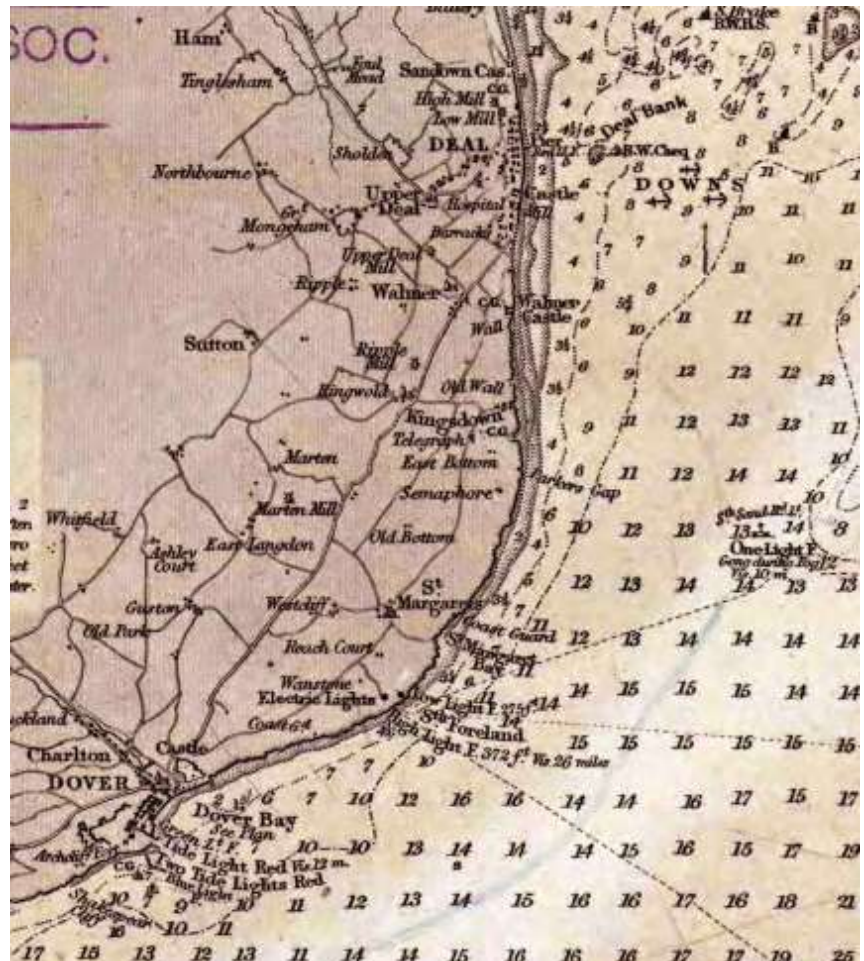
How rigged:- Bark.

Figurehead:- a Scroll head.

How built Carvel:- Framework & planking – wood.

Present master:- John Hughes Hurst

Subscribing owners:- Robert Gaskin of Kingston, 32 shares;
H. Campbell, 32 shares.



Map showing The Downs roadstead (anchorage) off the coast of Deal in Kent, England.

Cancelled Registered in London; National Archives, Canada; Shipping Registers - Montreal

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IMMIGRANT SAILING SHIPS AND THE CONDITIONS ONBOARD

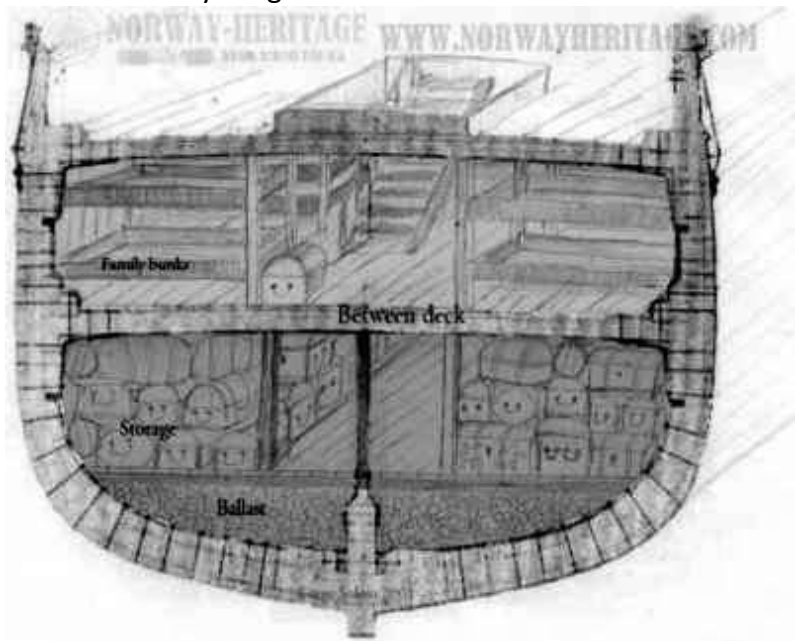
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A barque is a wooden sailing ship with three masts, in which the foremast and mainmast are square-rigged and the mizzenmast is rigged fore and aft. Variations on this design were not unusual.



A typical barque

Steerage Passengers - Emigrants Between Decks. By Børge Solem



<http://www.norwayheritage.com/steerage.htm>

The "steerage", or between-decks, often shortened to "tween-decks", was originally the deck immediately below the main deck of a sailing ship. In the early days of emigration the ships used to convey the emigrants were originally built for carrying cargo. In reality the passengers were placed in the cargo hold. Temporary partitions were usually erected and used for the steerage accommodation. To get down tween-decks the passengers often had to use ladders, and the passageway down between the hatches could be both narrow and steep. The manner in which the ships were equipped could vary since there were no set standards for this. It was necessary that the furnishings could be easily removed, and not cost more than absolutely necessary. As soon as the ships had set the passengers on land, the furnishings were discarded and the ship prepared for return cargo to Europe .

Steerage conditions on sailing vessels

The ceiling height of the between-deck was usually 6 to 8 feet. The bunks, made of rough boards, were set up along both sides of the ship. The bunks were ordinarily positioned so the passengers lay in the direction of the ship, from fore to aft, but on a few ships the bunks were placed transversely or thwartships. The latter caused passengers greater discomfort in rough seas. The larger ships might also have an additional row of bunks in the middle. On these ships there was only a small corridor between the bunks. Each bunk was intended to hold from three to six persons, and these were often called family bunks. The bunks were usually double-deck beds, i.e., there was one bunk on top of the other. Ads announced that on board the Bolivar, which sailed in 1852, there was enough headroom between the bunks that an adult could sit up in bed. The best place to have a bunk was amidships, because the rocking of the boat was felt less there. The bunks had straw mattresses or mattresses stuffed with straw. The emigrants had to bring their own pillows, blankets, animal hides and other necessary bedclothes. Contemporary sources report that lice and fleas thrived in this environment.



Some sketches of life "tween decks".



Daily life for the steerage passengers onboard an emigrant ship consisted of various routines and duties. When weather permitted, the passengers were usually up on deck. Some were busy cleaning and others with games to pass the time. The women were usually occupied with cooking, sewing and knitting. Some had to look after the children and care for the sick. The captain usually held Sunday services on deck. On ordinary weekdays, there was often dancing on deck. Activities depended on weather conditions, but music instruments could be put to good use even when the weather was bad.



Aménagement intérieur d'un bâtiment austro-hongrois destiné pour la Colombie.

With many passengers gathered in a limited space, rules regarding conduct were no doubt necessary. These rules set boundaries for daily life on board. Some captains were strict while others cared little about what the passengers did. While all types of games and entertainment were allowed and encouraged on some ships, such activities were forbidden on others.

The passengers traveling by sail had to bring their own food. This was often stored in a hold beneath the between-deck, and each day the passengers had to go down to fetch provisions. On the emigrant vessel *Laurvig*, baggage was piled on top of other cargo. Sometimes it was difficult for the passengers to get to their provisions, especially if there was little space in the cargo hold. On some ships there



was space for trunks and other loose equipment in the centre aisle, but this could, of course, be dangerous in bad weather. There are accounts about passengers who were injured by goods that slid back and forth on the deck. On the *Atalanta* in 1871, it was said that food chests and kegs with milk and beer were tied down in the centre aisle. The most common food was cured mutton and other salted or dried food. Flatbread was almost always brought along. Also customary were sour milk and beer in kegs. In addition they had dairy products with them such as butter

and soft whey cheese. They also had raw materials with them so they could cook porridge on board. The emigrants were also advised to take along equipment, such as a water pail, (the size according to the needs of each family, about 3 quarts a day per person) cooking pot, coffee kettle and dishes and eating utensils. They had to prepare their own food on the ship's galleys placed up on deck. Often there were no more than a couple of these to be shared by all the passengers. The lines for preparing food could easily become long, when there were several hundred passengers. Daily rations of wood and water were included in the price of the ticket.



Sanitary conditions on board - health and sickness on emigrant ships

"Our Captain was a hard and impulsive man, but even so I believe he had the welfare of the passengers at heart, especially their health, since he was strict about cleanliness" By Børge Solem

Ventilation could be a problem on board, especially during bad weather. Only very few ships had their own ventilation devices. The Bolivar had special ventilation pipes, but on most sailing ships were only ventilated through vents. During bad weather these vents had to be closed to prevent the ship from taking on water. If the bad weather lasted a while, the air could get very bad. On many ships, these vents were also the only source of light, so it got pitch black when they were closed. Because of the fire hazard, oil lamps could not be used during bad weather. And it did not help that most got seasick in bad weather. Vomit, and what was worse, could soil the entire between-deck. Those who were not seasick were made sick from the stench. Toilet facilities were often quite poor, if not non-existent. On board the Norden, which sailed from Bergen in 1866, there were two primitive toilets, one on each side of the ship. Only the toilet on the leeward side could be used. The ship had nearly 400 passengers, and there was always a line waiting to use the toilet. The stench in the between-deck was so bad that the crew-members did not want to go there. The first mate purified the air in the between-deck with a red-hot iron that he dipped into a pail of tar. The smoke and steam from the bubbling tar helped to deaden the worst stench. On other ships we learn that the air was cleansed with the steam from chlorine and vinegar.

Attempts were made on many of the ships to maintain fairly good hygiene. It was common that passengers had to assist with daily cleaning on the ships. Many passengers told about strict captains who rigidly enforced cleanliness. On the Drafna under the command of Captain Eckersberg, the between-deck was scraped twice a week. On the Laurvig in 1854, two passengers were assigned responsibility for cleaning each day. But even though the decks were washed, not all the passengers were just as careful about washing themselves. The lack of water may be partly to blame for this, but many were not accustomed to this from home. Rainwater was collected for all types of washing.

Most travel accounts from the days of the sail ships tell about seasickness. There was no medicine for this, but there were a number of home remedies. On the bark Ægir in 1837, the passengers were treated with gruel. Captain Eckersberg on the Drafna in 1852 attempted to keep the passengers above deck as much as possible, especially those who were seasick. There are similar accounts from other ships. But there were other illnesses that were far worse, and most sailing ships did not have a physician on board. The most common illnesses were cholera, typhoid fever, measles, chicken pox and dysentery. The great mortality among the emigrants certain years could most often be attributed to poor hygiene. The majority of those who succumbed were small children and elderly persons who had little resistance.

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